



ABATE OF MICHIGAN

June 7, 2011

To: Senate Transportation Committee
Re: SB-291

Committee Members:

I am hear today to ask for your support of SB-291 which will modify Michigan's mandatory helmet law for adult choice.

The issue of the state government MANDATING helmet usage versus individual adults using their own discretion on motorcycle helmet usage has been ongoing since the early 1970's.

"Safetycrats" have claimed continually that if a state modifies their mandatory helmet law, the fatality rates will increase by 20-40%, depending on which gennerally taxpayer-funded study that you read. If that were the case then fatalities or more specifically, the fatality rate (fatalities/ 100 accidents), in states that allow "choice" should be 20-40% higher than states with a mandatory helmet law.

The graph supplied in our position book gives you a factual look at the actual motorcycle fatality data taken from the real numbers provided by the National Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Department of Transportation (DOT). They compare states with mandatory helmet laws to those opting for adult choice on this issue. What it clearly shows is that there is NO INCREASE in fatality rates after a state modifies it's helmet law to allow for adult choice. Note the DECREASE in motorcycle fatalities from 1978 - 2004 in ALL states.

There HAS been an increase in motorcycle fatalities in recent years. You will note that it is approximately the same for mandatory law states vs. adult choice states. What this is due to is the dramatic increase in new motorcycle registrations and thus new INEXPERIENCED RIDERS. This points to the importance of rider education and licensing along with public awareness as the real safety issue.

This is a very emotional and controversial issue with a typical comment used by helmet law supporters being that they "know someone who was saved because of a helmet". This is purely a subjective statement and really doesn't address the issue.

There is no state in the union that has increased it's insurance rates with the modification of their mandatory helmet laws and, more importantly, there has been no state that has decreased their insurance rates with the implementation of a mandatory helmet law. When insurance industry representatives were asked this question in previous Senate hearings, the answer was a simple "NO"

Whether or not you believe in the effectiveness of wearing a motorcycle helmet, the fact is that HELMET LAWS have had no affect on reducing either motorcycle accidents and little affect, if any, on fatalities. The most effective way to stop accidents and thus reduce injuries and fatalities is to provide motorcycle rider courses to make safer riders and motorcycle awareness programs for car drivers.

Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely,

Jim Rhoades,
ABATE of Michigan - Legislative Director
Motorcycle Safety Foundation - Instructor/Coach 1979 - Present
REMCO Remodeling and Design, LLC - President and Owner